



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONS

### New activity begins

**T**he beginning of March will mark the official start-up of the Kosovo Election Assistance Program (KEAP).

KEAP, a USAID-supported activity, will support the transfer of election management responsibilities from international to Kosovar institutions and improve the legal framework for elections.

The program comes at a critical time in Kosovo's democratic development process. While status negotiation talks between Pristina and Belgrade are getting underway, Kosovo is preparing for local government elections to take place in 2006. The local government elections will be the first to be fully administered by Kosovar authorities in six years; therefore they are viewed as a test of Kosovo's ability to self-govern.

KEAP is implemented by IFES formerly known as the International Foundation for Election Systems. IFES has worked in Kosovo since 1998, providing assistance in the areas of electoral reform, civil society development and rule of law.

### Increasing capacities of Kosovo Courts

**F**urther development of existing capacities in the justice sector was the aim of a two-day seminar organized by USAID's Justice System Reform Activity.

The seminar which took place during January 31 - February 1 addressed the principles of human resource management, providing participants with a more detailed understanding of issues related to staff management.

"The information received during the seminar will serve as a baseline for our future work in the area of administration and human resource management. It will enable us to improve [our] day to day job[s]," said one of the participants.

The seminar also offered concrete tips on issues such as organizational and human resource development, namely, in job analysis, recruitment and selection, training and development, introduction to performance management, planning, monitoring and evaluation, discipline and discharge, etc.

43 court staff, participated in the seminar including 15 Municipal and two Minor Offense Court President Judges, Court Administrators, Civil Execution Clerk, Human Resource Officers from the Kosovo Justice Council, Ministry of Justice and Department of Justice.

USAID's Justice System Reform Activity is implemented by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

## DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### Discussing the law on access to information

**T**he Law on Access to Official Documents and its applicability was the topic of a heated discussion organized on February 7th.

The discussion concerned the fact that the law is not being implemented even though it was approved approximately three years ago. A major obstacle to the implementation of the law has been the delay in approving an Administrative Instruction (AI), which would clarify the issue of confidential and non-confidential documents. While a draft AI has been prepared, it is not approved yet due to concerns about the significant competencies this draft assigns to public institutions.

The participants complimented the structure of AI and the changes incorporated in it as a result of comments and suggestions coming from different institutions and media outlets, at the same time outlined problems caused due to the lack of AI.

The most critical participants in the debate were the journalists whose job basically depends on proper information, and lack of accessing documents is causing problem in retrieving information hence they're pressed on using alternative sources, which very often can be disputable.

The participants included representatives from Kosovo Archive, Ministry of Public Services, the Office of Ombudsperson, and Association of Professional Journalists of Kosova, the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms and media outlets contributed to the roundtable.

The debate was a joint effort of USAID's Media Assistance Project and Kosovo Civil Society Project both implemented by IREX in cooperation with Advocacy Training and Resource Center.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

### Identifying actions to improve poultry industry

**O**n February 10, the Kosovo Poultry Producer and Feed Miller Associations (SHPUK) held their Annual Assembly Meeting, which soon turned into a regional poultry conference. The shift was a result of concerns about the ever expanding Avian Influenza as well as a number of government agencies, donor and regional organizations present at the meeting.

The members discussed possibilities for improving the poultry industry, and addressed possible actions to be taken to promote SHPUK activities. The association members also voted for a new management board. SHPUK was established in 2000 and it plays an important role in helping agribusinesses generate incomes and create jobs within the rural areas of Kosovo.

SHPUK is supported by USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support Project in promoting its efforts to develop product and management standards that protect the public welfare and raise the quality of domestically produced and imported poultry products offered to the Kosovar consumer.

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

### Building peace by thinking critically

**“W**e should stop listening to our ancestors about wars and conflict because that will only engender hate,” says Jelena Burgic, a participant in a peacebuilding and conflict transformation training.

Jelena, a Serbian Kosovar is not alone; her views are shared by other youth from Obiliq/Obilic municipality, all participants in the training organized by the Balkans Youth without Borders (BYWB).

The training is part of a larger peace-building initiative aimed at eliminating fear and stereotypes by helping youth think critically about the world and their role in it.



Participants of the Conflict Transformation training in Obiliq/Obilic

The training curriculum is designed to cultivate a culture of peace by providing an environment where cooperative and participatory learning methods are employed to create an atmosphere of understanding, care, and respect. Through peace education, participants are focused to think rather than coached on what to think, as previously done.

These types of initiatives will help facilitate knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to achieve and sustain a local and global culture of peace. As Besfort Kurshumliu, an Albanian Kosovar said, "this training has changed me. I have never been so brave to trust myself as an agent of peace. I am determined to work toward peace and reconciliation in our community, which is multiethnic and very diverse."

Balkans Youth without Borders is a regional USAID-supported project implemented through the National Albanian American Council in Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro.

### Upcoming Events

**February 28** - Dr. Ken Yamashita will meet NGO representatives at the Advocacy and Training Resource Center

**March 9-10** - USAID's Justice System Reform Activity will organize a two day seminar on Budgeting and Fiscal Management in the Courts.



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